

hopeful and who will have the required energy to take the enormous efforts that some of us have made to open up these professions on to the next stage. My

what sceptical stance should warn them of the hard work and considerable challenges that lie ahead for them. I wish them good luck.

Further Reading

Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, '1992 and All That', keynote speech, BAC conference 1991, *Counselling* Volume 2, Number 4.

Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, chair's remarks, BAC conference 1994, *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, Volume 10, Number 4.

A Rose by Any Other Name: A Personal View on the Differences among Professional Titles

Windy Dryden

Whenever I am asked what is the difference between a counsellor and a psychotherapist, I reply 'About £8,000 a year'. I am tempted to leave it at that; but my semi-flippant answer will not do for this special issue, however. I have been asked to treat the subject of professional titles seriously and I will do so, although, as I will make clear, I personally find it a trivial one.

I am well aware that the question of titles in the helping professions is important to many people. Many years ago,

when I lived and worked in Birmingham, I hosted a party at my house. One of my friends introduced himself to a guest and told the man that he was a counsellor. The man smiled with slight disdain and announced haughtily that he was a psychotherapist. The way he pronounced the word 'psychotherapist' left my friend and me in no doubt which title he thought had the greater status.

As I said, I personally have never cared much about the importance of titles and I must confess that the entire issue of

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professional titles and their relationship to salient variables leaves me cold. So why write about the issue? Because I think the view of someone who considers professional titles to be unimportant needs airing.

Today, there are three main ways in which those who work in the psychological therapies can be registered or accredited. Thus, one can be a BAC-accredited counsellor, a UKCP-registered psychotherapist and hold the statement of equivalence for the Diploma in Counselling Psychology. I am on all three schemes and am in favour of them. I am happy to call myself a counsellor, a psychotherapist or a counselling psychologist. It really doesn't matter to me which of these titles I use. And I can also say that over the years most of my clients have not been at all interested in which title I use. They are more concerned about my competence. For the minority who are interested in titles, I am quite happy to use the title that they prefer. The title does not in any way affect my therapeutic behaviour, but if it helps them to think that I am, for example, a psychotherapist, then I will use this title in my work with them.

Many years ago my good friend and colleague Arnold Lazarus carried out an interesting small clinical study on the effect of the name of a therapeutic procedure on client outcome. Clients who wanted hypnosis responded better to a procedure thus labelled than to the same procedure labelled relaxation. The same effect was found with clients who wanted relaxation. Note that the procedure was exactly same, but the label was different. I believe that the same happens with those few clients for whom a particular title is important.

No doubt there are many practitioners who do think that there are real differences between counselling, counselling psychology and psychotherapy. However, I know of no research that has found such differences to exist in the consulting room. Indeed, those who attempt to specify these differences usually end up by noting that there are large areas of overlap between the three activities.

This is not surprising. For example, some consider counselling to be a short-term intervention focused on specific problems and psychotherapy to be a longer-term approach which aims to effect personality change. If so, then how can we reliably differentiate between brief counselling, long-term counselling, brief therapy and long-term therapy — terms which all appear in the literature? And can external observers reliably differentiate between how counsellors and counselling psychologists intervene with their clients? Again, very unlikely. This line of enquiry is unlikely to be fruitful and, in my view, is not worth pursuing.

If counsellors, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists cannot be reliably differentiated by their behaviour in the consulting room, can they be shown to be different with respect to their goals? Again I doubt it. Alvin Mahrer has argued that psychotherapy has two main goals: to relieve suffering, and to promote psychological growth. These two goals are also true of counselling and counselling psychology, so no differences are to be found here. But surely, counselling psychologists are informed by psychological knowledge, and psychotherapists and counsellors are not? Quite possibly, although I'd like to see research on this

old chestnut. And how does this refer to me? Do I stop reading the psychological literature when I portray myself with a given client as a counsellor or as a psychotherapist? Of course not.

Is there any alternative to this fruitless attempt to differentiate among professional titles? I think there is. Instead of concerning ourselves with titles, let's be clear about our *activities*. Let us first be clear with ourselves about what we are trained to do and what we are not trained to do. Then, let's be open with our clients about this so that they know where our strengths and weaknesses lie. This is not only honest, it is also ethical.

Why then are many people who work in the psychological therapies interested in titles? I think that this interest reflects status, money and professional identity. Those who are interested in status and money are concerned to be associated with high status and financially rewarding titles. Dare I say that those in this group are like the man at my party, more likely to call themselves psychotherapists than counsellors, for example? Those who are concerned with professional identity are also concerned with titles. I remember

a former chair of the erstwhile Special Group in Counselling Psychology urging its members to talk about counselling psychology rather than counselling. This was not because real differences exist between these two activities, but in order to promote the development of counselling psychology's professional identity.

So let's be clear why we want to differentiate between titles. We do this not because meaningful differences exist between counselling psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, or because most clients care about which title we use. It is because we are concerned with status, money and/or professional identity. There's nothing wrong with having these concerns. But to dress them up in any other form does everybody a disservice.

I will continue to call myself a counsellor, a counselling psychologist or a psychotherapist as the whim takes me, or when it helps my clients for me to use a specific title. I will continue to do so until research findings persuade me to do otherwise. Until then, when asked what is the difference between a counsellor and a psychotherapist, I will still reply 'About £8,000 a year!'

Further Reading

J. Elton-Wilson, 'Letter from the chair', *Counselling Psychology Review*, Volume 9, Number 2, 1994

Arnold Lazarus, "'Hypnosis" as a Facilitator in Behavior Therapy', *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Volume 21, 1973

Alvin Mahrer (ed), *The Goals of Psychotherapy*, Appleton-Century-Croft, 1967